

“HOW GOOD TO THOSE WHO SEEK!”**NO. 2436****A SERMON****INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, OCTOBER 27, 1895*****DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON*****AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON****ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 23, 1887*****“The LORD is good....to the soul that seeketh him.”******Lamentations 3:25***

I DO not know whether it has ever struck you what a grand man Jeremiah was. If you were to read the book of his prophecy through from beginning to end, and make yourself familiar with the circumstances under which the prophet spoke and wrote, I think you would come to admire him as one of the greatest men who ever lived. For he was not, like Isaiah, brightened and cheered by having a joyful message to deliver, but he had received a sorrowful burden from his Lord—and he faithfully carried it out—and when the people rejected his testimony and refused his message, he went on delivering it all the same.

There was no gleam of success to gladden his ministry, yet he never flinched. Nobody seemed to believe in him—he was the jest and the by-word of the people, but that did not matter to him at all. He was tender and affectionate, so that he cried, “Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!”

Yet he was as stern and unflinching as if his face had been made of adamant stone. I think him second to no man in the whole list of human beings who have ever lived. Hence, when I found some of those with whom I have been in controversy of late describing one of my protests against false doctrine and worldliness as a “Jeremiad,” or a Jeremiah’s Lamentation, I said to myself, “That is the highest compliment they could pay me.”

If they even call me a fool, yet nevertheless I will accept the epithet with delight. I count it no dishonor to have to lament as Jeremiah did, and to have to bear a sorrowful testimony even as Jeremiah did—and in that great day when the Lord rewards His servants, the rewards will not be in proportion to the way in which their testimony was received, but in proportion to the fidelity with which they delivered it.

If Jeremiah is rejected of men, yet, if he has delivered his Master’s message, he is not rejected of his Master. And in that great day when God the Judge of all shall bring us to account, we who have spoken out of the depths of our soul, and have had our testimony made jest and a by-word, shall receive none the less honor from our Lord if we have faithfully delivered it.

I begin with this thought, concerning the man who uttered my text, because the people who speak somewhat sorrowfully and sadly are said to be “pessimists.” It is an ugly word, yet I have had it applied to myself. Whereas other men who speak very brightly—possibly more brightly than they ought to speak—those who have *couleur de rose* for everything, are called “optimists.”

Well now, when a man is in deep distress of mind and in sore trouble of heart, if a person comes to him, and says, “Oh, my dear sir, there is really not much the matter with you! It is a very simple thing to cure, and I will soon get you through it,” you say to yourself, “That gentleman is an optimist,” and you make very large deductions from what he has to say, because you feel that he is inclined to flatter, and to put a brighter face upon things than they ought to wear.

But if another person comes, who is called a pessimist, one who always makes the worst of everything—a man who writes “Jeremiads” and who utters lamentations—if he, nevertheless, says

something very bright and cheering, you say to yourself, “Now I know that what he says is true. There must be something really cheering and hopeful when such a man as that, who dares to look at the dark side of things, can yet venture to encourage me.”

Well now, it is the prophet Jeremiah, in his Book of Lamentations, who says to you who are seeking the Lord, “The LORD is good to the soul that seeketh him.” You do not need to take any discount off his words of cheer. Depend upon it, what he says is true. If he of the weeping eyes, if he of the sorrowful spirit, yet nevertheless, in all the bitterness of his misery, bears testimony that the Lord is good to the soul that seeks Him, then, depend upon it, it is so. So we begin at an advantage. I pray you to believe the text, because of the man who was inspired to utter it.

I shall try briefly and earnestly, first, *to describe a seeking soul*. Next, *to assure him that God is good to him*. And then *further to cheer him on in his seeking*.

I. First, I am to try to DESCRIBE A SEEKING SOUL.

Everybody does not seek the Lord. There are many who say to God, by their actions if not by their words, “Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.” The man who seeks the Lord is the man who feels that he wants Him. *He is under a sense of need*—a need which he could hardly describe, but which, nevertheless, weighs very heavily upon him.

He needs something very great, but he hardly knows what it is. He feels that he has a void—an emptiness within that needs filling. There is a something that he believes would content him if he could get it, but he has not got it yet. He feels that he is not right with God, he feels like one who is far off from God. He feels guilty and he wants pardon. He feels sinful and he wants renewing. He feels everything that he ought not to be, and he wants to be changed, to be made a new man. That is the one who seeks the Lord—a man does not seek after that which he does not want—but a conscious and urgent need drives the troubled soul to seek after God.

This seeker also is one who, though he does not know it, *has a measure of faith*, for he believes, deep down in his heart, that if he could once get to God, all would be well with him. He has heard of God in Christ Jesus and he says within himself, “Oh, if I could but find this blessed Mediator, if I could but discover this glorious Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, it would be well with me.”

He has not believed so as to appropriate Christ, but he believes so much as to wish that he could appropriate Him. This is the man who seeks the Lord. We do not seek for that which appears to have no value in it, but in proportion as a man has, first, a sense of his need, and secondly some idea of the value of the great blessing which he needs, he becomes an earnest seeker. I hope I am talking to some persons of this kind, as I am describing their true character.

Further, this seeker *sometimes seeks very unwisely*. He goes to seek God where he will never find Him, like the holy women did when they went to the sepulchre to find the risen Christ, and the angel asked them why they were seeking the living among the dead. When a soul wants God, and wants salvation, it will begin to seek the Lord by its own doings, by its own feelings, by its own strange eccentricities, perhaps. It wants God and it must have Him.

You know how a starving man will break through stone walls to get at the food that he so terribly needs, and often, a man who is seeking after God would go through stone walls, or over them, if he might but find Him—yet that is not the way to seek the Lord. “Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead).”

Christ is not far off, He is very near you—and yet the seeker is unwisely seeking after God as though He were far away—and for Christ as though he had to do some strange and wonderful thing in order to find Him. Some of you think that you must have a remarkable dream, others expect an angelic vision, some are waiting to hear a very extraordinary sermon, and to feel very amazing emotions. This is the nature of seekers, that they often seek in a very unwise way. But still, they *do* seek—and it is a mercy that they do seek—for, “The Lord is good to the soul that seeketh him.”

I will tell you what true seekers do when they act wisely. I notice that *they often get alone*. When you begin to seek the Lord, my young friend, you will steal away by yourself. Father and mother will say, “We do not quite know what has come over him, he seems so different from what he used to be. He gets up into his little room—we think he must go there to pray.” If his parents are gracious people, they begin to have great hope of him.

I remember times when I was never so happy as when I could get alone. Seekers, true seekers, will find some quiet place. That is a difficult thing to find in this noisy London, yet a real seeker will make even a crowded street to be his place of retirement, or he will walk down some back alley, and be thinking, and crying, and seeking, and groaning.

But in the country, how often have I known young lads to get down a sawpit, or up a hayloft, or in the corner of a barn, or anywhere where they could but sit in quiet meditation, and try to think their way to Jesus’ feet, that they might find Him if they could. That getting alone is a good sign. When a stag is wounded, it delights to hide in the recesses of the forest that it may bleed and die alone. And when God has shot His arrow of conviction into a human heart, one of the first signs of the wounding is that the man likes to get alone.

I will tell you another thing about the true seeker. You will find *that he begins to bring out his Bible*, that much-neglected Book. Now that he is seeking the Lord, he knows that—

*“Within this sacred Volume lies,
The mystery of mysteries.”*

And he begins to study his Bible as he never did before.

It is a blessed sign when the young man or the young woman begins to take an interest in the Word of God and searches the Scriptures, saying, “Lord, bless this Book to me. The Christ is here. He feeds among the lilies of Your revealed truth. Oh, that I might meet Him, and that I might call Him mine!”

And as, perhaps, in his study of the Scriptures he meets with difficulties, you will find that this seeking young man is anxious to *go and hear the Word preached*, for the Word rightly preached has a warmth about it and a vividness, which are not always so manifest to the seeker in his reading of the Word.

If you are true seekers, I know that you will want to go and hear a preacher who touches your conscience, who speaks to your heart, and who longs to bring you to Christ. My dear hearers, I do not mind where you go on the Sabbath day if you really hear the truth faithfully preached!

As far as I am concerned, there are plenty of people here, but I do wish that, on the Sabbath, and on weeknights too, you would not have any desire to go and hear a “clever” preacher, or to some fine musical service, but that you would say, “We have to care first for our immortal souls, and we long to seek and find eternal life, therefore let us go where the minister preaches Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Let us go where we can hear the Gospel of the grace of God, for that is what we want.”

You cannot afford to throw away a single hour, either in listening to human oratory or to any other kind of performance. With you, it must be, “Give me Christ, or else I die.” Therefore be diligent in hearing the Gospel preached.

That is, then, another mark of a true seeker—he loves to be alone, he searches the Scriptures, he goes as much as he can to hear the Gospel preached.

And there is another sign of the true seeker that I always love to see—*he likes to get into godly company*. He does not care now for the friends he once so much admired—his merry friends who laughed away the years—if he can but get where he can hear a few poor people talking about Jesus. Something like John Bunyan, you remember, who saw three or four godly women at Bedford talking about the things of God, and the tinker drew near, and listened to their gracious conversation, though their talk about the new birth was beyond his comprehension.

That is good seeking when you turn eavesdropper to hear about Christ, when you like to listen to some poor neighbor who does not know much more than you yourself know, but who, in her simple language, talks about an experience of the things of God to which you have not as yet attained, but which you wish you had felt and known.

There is another mark of a seeker that is better still, “*Behold, he prayeth.*” Possibly, he used to repeat a form of prayer, but he has given that up and now he talks to God straight out of his heart and asks for what he really wants. And he not only does that morning and evening, but he is praying during most of the day. If you watch him even from the other side of the counter, you may hear a sigh every now and then. Or when he is at his work, driving the plane, or using the hammer—if you are close to him, you may see his lips moving and you may catch such words as these, “Savior, reveal Yourself to me. Blood of Christ, cleanse me. Spirit of God, renew me.” That is one of the men who are seeking the Lord.

I think there will be one more mark that you will see upon a sincere seeker—he will quit all that is evil as much as possible and he will seek after that which is good—and especially, *he will seek after faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*. He has heard it said that he that believes in Him has everlasting life and he says to himself, “Oh, that I could believe in Him!”

You will see him now trying to believe, very much like a little child tries to take his first steps in walking alone. His mother holds out an apple and baby makes a daring venture to try with three or four steps to get across to where mother holds out the bribe. Oh, I love to see poor souls trying to trust Christ, trying to rest in Jesus! They often make sorry work of it, but still, the Lord accepts it, for with their hearts they are really trying to rest in Jesus. If, poor trembling seeker, your faith should bring you no comfort because it is so weak—keep on trusting to Christ.

When the brazen serpent was lifted up, all who looked to it were healed. There were, doubtless, some clear bright eyes that saw the brazen serpent from its head to its tail, and as they looked, they lived. But there were probably others who were so bitten by the serpents that their eyes were swollen and dim—they could only see out of the corners and the death-damp seemed to blind even that little bit of sight which they had.

But oh, if they could only get just a glimpse, so as just to see the glittering brass, though they could not make out the shape of the serpent, yet they lived. They were bidden to look, and if they looked, and could not see, yet the promise was not to the seeing, but to the looking. And so, as they looked, they were healed. Thus look to Jesus and you shall live.

I trust that many seekers here have come as far as this. If so, I may now conduct them to the next stage of my sermon.

II. I want, in the second place, to ASSURE THE SEEKING SOUL THAT THE LORD IS GOOD TO HIM, “The Lord is good to the soul that seeketh him.”

“Ah!” says one, “my heart is almost ready to break. I have been seeking so long, I feel so sad, I am so discouraged.” But “the Lord is good to the soul that seeketh him.” Let me show you this truth very rapidly.

First, *it is good of Him to have set you seeking at all*. He might have left you in your sins as He has left so many thousands of your fellow men. He might have left you to be content with this vain, wicked world. At this moment, you might have been leaning across the counter of the gin palace instead of listening to the Word of the Lord.

Ay, instead of going home to pray, you might have been getting to the harlot’s haunt, and tomorrow, instead of coming to the prayer meeting, you might have been found where the multitude amuse themselves with vice. Thank God that you are a seeker, for there is something good in that fact. On a dark night you may be grateful for one star shining in the sky, or even for a single match—it is very little, you think, but thank God for that little. “The Lord is good to the soul that seeketh him,” in setting him seeking at all.

But God is also good to the seeker *in giving him some gleams of comfort*. Did you say that you had been seeking the Lord for months? Well, how is it that you have kept on seeking? I think it must be

because you have sometimes had a few rays of light. I cannot give you any better evidence than my own. I was long in seeking Christ, and for that I blame myself, not Christ. But there were times, before I found Him, when I almost met with Him. I did not see *Him*, but I seemed to see the trees move as He passed along. I did not see *Him*, but I heard His footsteps, and sometimes I went home and said to myself, “Oh, yes, I shall find Him! I shall not cry to Him in vain.” I even thought sometimes that I had laid hold of Him and that I had trusted Him—and though I went back again into despondency, yet I was not without hope of ultimately finding Him.

You know what it is sometimes, when you are very hungry and you cannot get a meal, if you can get just a bite or two of something. It keeps you up till the mealtime comes. Well, it was like that when I was hungering and thirsting for Christ. Many a crumb this poor dog picked up from under the Master’s table and so I was encouraged to keep on seeking till I found my Savior.

Is it not so with you, dear friend? Yes, the Lord is good to them that seek Him by just keeping their courage up and preventing them from sinking utterly into despair. Is He not good in keeping back the temptation which might have destroyed you? The foul insinuations of Satan trouble you, but they might be worse than they are. You have been driven almost to despair, but not quite. You have grated against the rock, but you are not shipwrecked yet. “He stays his rough wind in the day of the east wind.” Thank God for that. “The Lord is good to the soul that seeketh him.”

I think that He is also good *in not letting us rest short of Himself*. You would have liked to have had comfort long ago, would you not? Ay, but comfort is not the main thing that you require—you need safety. Often the surgeon, when he has a bad case, will not let the wound heal. “No, not yet,” says he. “if that wound heals too soon, there will be more mischief coming from it.” So he lets in his lancet again and cuts out a bit of proud flesh.

And our Lord will not let us close up the wound that sin has made lest it is but a sorry healing that will end in a worse wound than before. I pray God that no one who is really seeking Christ may ever be able to rest till he gets to Him. There is good resting at the foot of the cross, but you want to rest before you get there. I thank God for not letting you rest until you get to Christ, and I hope you will say—

***“I will not be comforted
Till Jesus comforts me.”***

Make that your resolve and may the Spirit of God keep you up to it! If so, you also will prove that “the Lord is good to the soul that seeketh him.”

But He is much better to them that seek Him than you have ever imagined, for *He has given such rich promises to seekers*. Oh, the blessed invitations of Christ! “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

This blessed Book is full of such promises as these—just the kind of promises that seeking souls need. And they all prove that the Lord is, indeed, good to them that seek Him.

He is also good to seekers because *He has made the way of salvation so plain*. Brethren, there are certain gentlemen, nowadays, who want us to have what they call an advanced theology, an eclectic religion which will suit those who are supposed to be “cultured.” O God, save me from ever hearing such a thing as that! I want to be the means of saving to the poor and needy, the ignorant and the fallen—and God wishes to save such people—and therefore He puts the Gospel very plainly, “Believe and live. Trust the great Sacrifice, rely on Jesus crucified, and you are saved, and saved forever.”

A man with an intellect not much above that of an idiot may understand this Gospel and enjoy it, while a man with the greatest mental powers cannot understand it any better—no, he cannot understand it at all, unless the Spirit of God shall reveal it to him. I thank God that it is not a difficult way of

salvation that He has laid before us, but that it is simple, or as men say, “as plain as a pikestaff.” God bring us all to accept this gracious plan of salvation!

Then, once more, is it not very good of the Lord *in being found of seekers in due time*? There is no true seeker who shall die in his sins. If you are sincerely seeking, you shall find—this is promised in our Lord’s own words that we read just now, “For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”

If I could take you through the whole dread region of hell, if we could pause at every cell where the finally impenitent are shut up without hope, and if it were possible to interrogate every lost spirit, there would not be found there a single one that sincerely sought the Lord through Jesus Christ. No one shall be able to stand up at the last great day and say, “I came to Jesus, but He cast me out. I trusted Him, but He did not keep His promise.”

No, my dear hearer, if ever you shall be lost, it will be because you never came to Christ, because you never trusted Him, because you would not have Him as your Savior. But if you come to Christ—poor, ragged, defiled, loathsome, guilty up to the hilt—if you come to Christ, remember that He said, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” And that word still stands true. If you seek the Lord with all your heart, you shall surely find Him, for He “is good to the soul that seeketh him.”

I try to speak to you very plainly, as if I were talking to you by your own fireside. I do not feel at any great distance from you in standing here to speak to all of you round about me, yet I half wish that I could get a hold of your hands, you unconverted ones, and say to you, “Do believe that my Lord is good to them that seek Him. Do believe it and seek Him for yourselves.”

He is a good Lord. We sang, a few minutes ago—

*“Oh, hope of every contrite heart!
Oh, joy of all the meek!
To those who fall, how kind Thou art!
How good to those who seek!”*

Those are not mere words—they are the very truth of God. He is, indeed, good to those who seek Him.

III. But lest I weary any seeker where I want to win him, I shall close by FURTHER CHEERING HIM ON IN HIS SEEKING.

Friend, be of good comfort, *Christ is seeking you*. It is written, “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” If I were at this time seeking a person in London, I might have a long and difficult task—it would be like the proverbial “hunting for a needle in a bottle of hay.” But suppose I knew that the person I was seeking was also seeking me? I think then I should say that there was a double probability of our meeting. If I am seeking him, and he is seeking me, and especially if he who seeks me is a man of high intelligence and wide knowledge, we shall meet one of these mornings or evenings, depend upon it.

So, if you are seeking Christ, that is hopeful. But if Christ is seeking you and He knows all about you—all the ins and outs of your poor life—He and you will come together soon, I am persuaded of it. You are drawing nearer to each other every hour, and it will not be long before your arms are about His neck, and His arms about yours. You will be rejoicing in Him and He will be rejoicing over you.

I want to give you another word of good cheer, my seeking friend. *It may not be long before you find the Savior*. It may, indeed, be so little a while that, before the clock strikes again, you will have found Him. Why not? “Oh!” say you, “I wish it might be so! Oh, that I might find the Lord in that short time!”

Well, look at me. Some four or five years I had been seeking Christ under a heavy burden of sin. I remember well that Sabbath morning in the month of January, 1850, for there was a very severe snowstorm. I was going to the Congregational Chapel at Colchester that morning, but it snowed so heavily that I turned into the little Primitive Methodist Chapel, merely because of the heaviness of that snowstorm.

I was cold at heart, almost despairing. I thought that I should never find the Savior, but between half-past ten o'clock, when I entered that place, and half-past twelve o'clock, when I was back again at home, what a change had taken place in me! I had passed from darkness into marvelous light, from death to life. Simply by looking to Jesus, I had been delivered from despair, and I was brought into such a joyous state of mind that, when they saw me at home, they said to me, “Something wonderful has happened to you.” And I was eager to tell them all about it. I was like Bunyan when he wanted to tell the crows on the ploughed field all about his conversion.

Yes, I had looked to Jesus as I was, and found in Him my Savior. Well now, this October Sabbath night, you, dear heart, have been seeking the Lord for ever so long. You will not need to seek Him any more if you will but look to Him—that is all you have to do. Look to Him! Look to Him! Look to Him and as you look to Him, the great transaction will be done—your burden will be gone, the joy of salvation will be given to you from heaven by God’s own right hand—and you shall have a new song in your mouth, your feet shall be set upon the rock, and your goings shall be established.

And mark you this—*when the blessing comes, it will be worth waiting for.* When the pardon of your sin comes, you will say, “I do not regret my cries and tears, my weary waitings and anxious seekings. He has come! *He* has come! HE has come, my Lord and my God!” Why, if I had to wait at the posts of His door from youth to old age, yet if I found Him at last, it would well repay all my waiting. The joy and peace through believing which come from Christ are a wonderful off-set against the tears and sorrows that we have endured while we have been seeking Him.

This is my closing thought—you *have no need to go about seeking Christ any longer.* You have no need to wait even five minutes ere you find Him, for it is written, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” Do you know what it is to believe on Him, to trust Him? Do so now.

“It would be a great venture,” says one. Then venture on Him. “Would He save me?” Try Him. You have heard, I dare say, of the African who came over to England. Before he came, the missionary told him that, sometimes, it was so cold in England that the water grew hard and men could walk on it. Now, the man had heard a great many things that were not true which he had believed, but this, he said, he would never believe. It was “one great big lie, for nobody ever could walk on water.”

When he woke up, one December morning, and the stream was frozen over, he still said that he would not believe it. Even when his friend went on the ice and stood there, and said, “Now you can see that what I told you was true. This is water, yet it is hard, and it bears me up.” The African would not believe it, till his friend said to him, “Come along,” and he gave him a pull and dragged him on the ice, and then he said, “Yes, it is true, for it bears me up.”

I would like to give some of you a bit of a pull like that. I am resting on Christ, on Christ alone, and He bears me up. Come along and try Him for yourselves. May the Lord lead you to do so! There never yet was a heart that truly trusted in Christ that was deceived by Him.

Remember that verse which we sang at the beginning of the service, and—

*“Venture on Him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude;
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good.”*

Then shall you know for certain that “the Lord is good to the soul that seeketh him.”

God bless and save you, every one, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

MATTHEW 7:7-29

7. *Ask, and it shall be given you;*

He that will not ask for it deserves to go without it. Have you ever asked for it? If not, whose fault is it that you have it not?

7. *Seek, and ye shall find;*

How can you hope to find if you do not seek? Have you never found it? Have you never sought it? And if you have never sought it, how do you excuse yourselves for your neglect?

7. *Knock, and it shall be opened unto you:*

Is that all—knock? Is the gate of heaven not opened to you? Have you never knocked? Do you wonder, therefore, that the door is shut? Take care, for the time may come when you will knock and the door will not be opened to you. For, “when once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door,” then knocking shall be in vain. But at present this verse is still God’s gracious word of command and promise. Let me read it to you again, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”

8. *For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*

When you are dealing with men, this is not always true. You may ask, and not receive. You may seek, and not find. You may knock, and not have the door opened to you. But when you deal with God, there are no failures or refusals. Every true asker receives, every true seeker finds, and every true knocker has the door opened to him. Will you not try it, and prove for yourself that it is even so?

9-11. *Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?*

You not only give, but you know how to give so as not to disappoint the asker. It is most blessedly so with the great Father in heaven. He will not give you that which will mock and disappoint you. He will give you bread, not a stone, fish, not a serpent, nay, more, He will give you the bread of life, and the water of life, that you may live forever.

12. *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.*

This is rightly called “the golden rule.” Christ says of it that it is “the law and the prophets.” It is the essence of them, it is the sum and substance of the highest morality. What you would that others should do to you, do that to them. Do not let that golden rule remain merely as a record in this Book, but take it out with you into your daily life.

If we did all act to others as we would that others should act to us, how different would the lives of many men become! Ours would be a happy world if this law of Christ were the law of England, and the law of all nations. God send us the Spirit by whom alone we shall be able to obey so high a rule!

13. *Enter ye in at the strait gate*

The narrow gate.

13-14. *For wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

Do not try to go with the majority. Truth is usually with the minority. Do not count heads, and say, “I am for that which has the most on its side.” But prefer that which is least liked among men, choose that which is most difficult, most trying to flesh and blood, that which gives you least license, because “strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

You will not hit upon it, then, in a “happy-go-lucky” sort of style. Heaven’s gate is not found open by accident. There never was anybody yet who was saved by accident. No, “few there be that find it,” is still true. God grant that we may be among the few! And why should we not be?

15. *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*

There are always plenty of them about. There is nothing of the sheep about them but the skin, and there is no connection between that skin and those that wear it.

16-20. *Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.*

You may judge men as well as trees that way; and you may judge doctrines that way. That which gives a license to sin cannot be true, but that which makes for holiness is true—for, somehow, truth of doctrine and holiness of life run together. We cannot expect holiness to grow out of falsehood, but we may expect all manner of evil to come out of false teaching.

21. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in heaven.*

Practice is the true test, not words. Not he that says, “Lord, Lord,” but “he that doeth the will of God,” not he that merely has good words on his tongue, but he that has the will of God laid up in his heart, and wrought out in his life, that is the man who “shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

22-23. *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

If our lives are evil, it does not matter to what denomination we belong. We may be clever preachers, or mighty teachers, we may fancy that we have had dreams and visions, we may set ourselves up to be some great ones, but if we have not done the will of God, we shall at the last hear Christ say to us, “Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

24-25. *Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.*

He was a good man, and a practical man—yet he was also a tried man. His house was built on the rock, but that did not prevent the rain descending, and the floods coming, and the winds blowing. The highest type of godliness will not save you from troubles and trials. It will, in some measure, even necessitate them. But blessed be God, here lies the gem of the parable or narrative, “It fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.” It could stand the strain and endure the test, for it had a good foundation.

26-27. *And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.*

He was a great hearer, but he was a bad doer—yet he thought that he was a good doer, for he built a house. Alas, the house was on the sand! There was no real obedience to Christ, no true trusting in Him. And so, when the time of trouble came, and trouble will come even to the hypocrite and to the false professor, we read of his house, “It fell: and great was the fall of it,” because it could never be built up again. It fell hopelessly, it fell forever, therefore, “Great was the fall of it.”

28-29. *And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.*

There was a force and power about what Jesus said, He spoke from the heart, He spoke with the accent of conviction—whereas the scribes and Pharisees only spoke magisterially and officially, with no heart in their utterance, and there was therefore no power about it. God give to all of us the grace to know the power of the words of Christ! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—492, 540, 786

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